

SWAN RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Kalispell, Montana

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Calendar Year 2002

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM**

REVIEWS AND APPROVALS

SWAN RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Calendar Year 2002

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Refuge Manager

5/19/04
Date

David Wiseman
Project Leader

5/19/04
Date

Steve Berenson
Refuge Supervisor Review

7/13/04
Date

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Regional Office Approval

7/16/04
Date

INTRODUCTION

The Swan River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), is located in northwest Montana, 38 miles southeast of the town of Creston, in the serene and picturesque Swan Valley Mountain Range. The Refuge was established in 1973 at the request of Montana Senator Lee Metcalf, who often hunted the area and desired to see it preserved. The Refuge was established under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. It consists of 1,568 acres, with an additional 210-acre Forest Service in-holding that is managed under a Memorandum of Understanding. The refuge boundary lines within the flood plain of the Swan River above Swan Lake and between the Swan Mountain Range to the east and the Mission Mountain Range to the west. The valley was formed when glacial water poured down the steep slopes of the Mission Range into Flathead Lake. The valley floor is generally flat, but rises steeply to adjacent forested mountain sides. Approximately 80 percent of the refuge lies within this valley flood plain, which is composed mainly of reed canary grass. Deciduous and coniferous forests comprise the remaining 20 percent. Swan River, which once meandered through the flood plain, has been forced to the west side of the refuge by past earthquakes and deposits of silt. The result of these geologic events is a series of oxbow sloughs within the refuge flood plain.

The purpose of the refuge is "...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds". Objectives of the refuge are to provide for waterfowl habitat and production and to provide for other migratory bird habitat. The refuge also provides a nesting site for a pair of bald eagles and a variety of other avian species. In addition, deer, elk, moose, beaver, bobcat, black bear, and grizzly bears are known to inhabit the area. There are no significant developments or facilities on the refuge and present management is directed at maintaining the area in it's natural state. The refuge is a satellite unit of the National Bison Range Complex. Day-to-day administration and operations are the responsibility of the on-site Assistant Refuge Manager located at Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge, Marion, Montana.

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A. HIGHLIGHTS

Swan Refuge had little “highlighted” activity in 2002. The Refuge is “managed” in it’s natural state each year; no management was applied in 2002.

However, alleged flooding issues came to light this year when an adjacent landowner complained the Bond Creek tributary on the refuge was “clogged” with vegetation resulting in flooding of his property (section F.2.).

B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

With the exception of total annual snowfall amounts, climatic conditions on the Refuge are similar to climatic conditions in the Flathead Valley. No exact weather data is available for the Refuge. However, Flathead Valley experienced colder than normal temperature and increased snowfall in January and March; record low temperatures were recorded in April; record rainfall was recorded in May; July saw record high temperatures; August had several recorded sub-freezing temperatures; the year also saw colder than normal temperatures in October and relatively mild temperatures in December.

Kalispell’s total precipitation in 2002 was 3 inches below the 30-year average for the year.

C. LAND ACQUISITION

1. Fee Title

There was no land acquisition to the refuge in 2002.

2. Easements

Nothing to report.

3. Other

Nothing to report.



Figure 1 Visitors at the viewing platform.

LV 2002

D. PLANNING

1. Master Plan

Nothing to report.

2. Management Plan

Nothing to report.

3. Public Participation

Nothing to report.

4. Compliance with Environmental and Cultural Resource Mandates (CECRA)

Nothing to report.

5. Research and Investigations

Nothing to report.

6. Other

Nothing to report.

E. ADMINISTRATION

1. Personnel

The Swan River NWR is a satellite unit of the National Bison Range Complex (NBR). The Refuge is administered as an entity of the "north valley units". Assistant Manager, Ray Washtak directs operations on the Refuge from the Refuge office at Lost Trail Refuge, Marion . Montana, nearly 100 miles away. Washtak plans and directs daily activities such as budgeting, administrative and operational functions. Supervision is afforded by the Project Leader at NBR.

On March 11th, Loren Clary, equipment operator at NBR was detailed to Lost Trail Refuge to assist with operations in the "north valley," including Swan Refuge.

2. Youth Programs

Nothing to report.

3. Other Manpower Programs

Nothing to report.

4. Volunteer Programs

Bonnie Clary volunteered her services on "north valley units" while her husband, Loren Clary assisted with on-going operations. Due to priorities at Lost Trail, Bonnie did not assist directly with any volunteer activities on Swan NWR.

Dick and Bev Sherman continued their volunteer efforts this year on the refuge by keeping the informational kiosk stocked with refuge brochures and bird lists as well as completing periodic maintenance on the viewing platform. The volunteers also maintained refuge boundary signs, replacing them as needed. Their volunteer hours totaled 108 for the year.

Table 1. Volunteers and volunteer hours for 2002.

Activity	Volunteer Hours
Habitat Management	
Pest Plant Control	40
Resource Protection	
Law Enforcement	25
Public Education and Recreation	
Provide Visitor Services	43
TOTALS	108

5. Funding

Administrative and operational funding for the Refuge is included in the over-all annual appropriation of the NBR Complex. Specific funding needs for the Refuge are submitted to the project leader via annual work plan submissions. See the NBR annual narrative for specific details.

6. Safety

Nothing to report.

7. Technical Assistance

Nothing to report.

8. Other

Nothing to report.

F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

1. General

Nothing to report.

2. Wetlands

Approximately 1,254 acres of the refuge are classified as a wetland/grassland complex. All of this acreage lies within an "alluvial flood plain" adjacent to the south end of Swan Lake. Vegetation is composed primarily of mono-typic stands of reed canary grass.

With the exception of a culvert under Bog Road in Spring Creek and a staff gauge within the creek, which in the past has been used for recording water flow levels, no other water control structures, facilities or developments exist on the refuge.

Flooding of refuge occurs on an annual basis in May, June and July. Flood waters flow into the refuge from several tributaries: Swan River, Bond Creek, Yew Creek and Spring Creek. See figure 1, page 7.

In 2002, a local, adjacent landowner complained that vegetation, beaver dams and silt buildup on the Refuge in the Bond Creek tributary were backing water onto his property. Refuge staff, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP) and the State Highway Department investigated the allegation and found the drainage system to have a natural gradient, thereby resulting in a "natural pooling system". The adjacent landowner's complaints of "Service fault" were unfounded. The Service was threatened by a potential lawsuit which never developed.



Figure 2 Annual flooding of the Refuge occurs each May. This view is looking west on Bog Road near the parking lot, kiosk, and viewing platform. RW 5/02

3. Forests

Forested areas comprise approximately 313 acres of the refuge. Wooded tracts lie primarily on the west, south and southeastern portions of the refuge. Tree species include old growth fir, spruce, cedar and larch. Large, old growth cottonwood trees are found along the banks of the Swan River. All forested units are maintained in their natural state.

4. Croplands

Nothing to report.

5. Grasslands

Nothing to report.

6. Other Habitats

Nothing to report.

7. Grazing

There was no grazing on the Refuge in 2002 due to a lack of willing permittees.

8. Haying

There was no haying on the Refuge in 2002 due to a lack of willing permittees.

9. Fire Management

Nothing to report.

10. Pest Control

Nothing to report.

11. Water Rights

Nothing to report.

12. Wilderness and Special Areas

Nothing to report.

13. WPA Easement Monitoring

Nothing to report.



Figure 3 View looking to the north from the refuge viewing platform. LV 2002

G. WILDLIFE

1. Wildlife Diversity

Nothing to report.

2. Endangered and/or Threatened Species

The bald eagle pair was observed incubating in early May. Volunteers Dick and Bev Sherman reported two eaglets in the nest later in the month. The bald eagle pair have hatched and fledged 25 eaglets since 1985.

"Transient" bald eagles were observed on the Refuge on several occasions this year. The eagles were observed resting and loafing in the large cottonwood trees along the banks of Swan River.

3. Waterfowl

a. Ducks

Due to time constraints and other on-going responsibilities, duck pair counts were not completed this year.

The Refuge provides habitat and nesting sites for 23 species of waterfowl. The most popular species that can be observed are: mallard, common goldeneye, cinnamon teal, blue wing teal, wigeon, lesser scaup, wood duck, common merganser, red head, ring-neck and Canada goose. These species can be observed during most months of the year. No population surveys were conducted this year.

b. Geese

Canada goose populations are based on random observations made in conjunction with on-going refuge projects. The early April aerial pair count was not completed this year. Dean Vaughan, Brett Gullet, a CS&KT Wildlife biologist, and pilot Bob Twist, conducted the aerial goose pair census on May 3 and 4. Six pairs, five singles and one brood with 30 goslings were observed.

The goose productivity flight was flown in early June; only 11 goslings were observed on the refuge during this year's flight. This may or may not represent actual refuge production since goslings are often hard to observe due to heavy vegetation on the refuge which limits our observation attempts and the fact goslings often migrate to other "off-refuge" areas on Swan River and Swan Lake.

4. Marsh and Water Birds

Annual flooding on the refuge in the late spring and early summer months provided excellent marsh habitat for sora, rails, pied-billed grebes, red-necked and horned grebes, American bitterns, great blue herons, and many other species of marsh and water birds. Populations peak during the mid and late summer months. As cooler weather sets in, the birds depart for warmer climates. Nesting probably occurs on the Refuge; however, no formal nesting searches are conducted.

5. Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns and Allied Species

Species utilizing the refuge this year included California and ring-billed gulls, black tern, Wilson's phalarope, common snipe, American avocet, kill deer and several species of sandpipers. Populations peaked in July and August.

6. Raptors

Coniferous and deciduous forest areas on the refuge continued to offer excellent resting and loafing sites for many raptor species. Northern harriers, Swainson's hawks, red-tailed hawks and great-horned owls were observed on nearly every visit to the refuge.

7. Other Migratory Birds

Sixty-four species of non-game migratory birds have been observed utilizing the Refuge during the spring, summer, and early fall months. Red-winged blackbirds, common yellow-throats, song sparrows, tree swallows and common snipe are the most frequently observed species.

8. Game Mammals

The Refuge continues to provide excellent year-round habitat for many indigenous big game mammals. Deer and elk tracks are commonly seen in most upland areas on the Refuge and on Bog Road. Black bear scat has been

observed in areas bordered by Nature Conservancy lands. In the late summer and early fall months, cow moose and their calves are often observed in marshy areas in the northwest corner of the Refuge. Elk are known to winter within the old-growth fir and spruce groves.

White-tailed deer are the most commonly observed game mammal. No formal population surveys were conducted this year.

9. Marine Mammals

Nothing to report.

10. Other Resident Wildlife

Coyotes, beaver, muskrat and raccoons inhabit the Refuge. Observations this year were generally made near the river or on backwater sloughs within the Refuge.

11. Fisheries Resources

Game fish common to Swan Lake and portions of Swan River include yellow perch, bull trout, northern pike, kokanee salmon, largemouth bass, cutthroat, brook trout and mountain whitefish. The entire Refuge, including Spring Creek, is closed to fishing as part of the annual Refuge closure from March 1 through July 1 (Section H.1.)

12. Wildlife Propagation & Stocking

Nothing to report.

13. Surplus Animal Disposal

Nothing to report.

14. Scientific Collections

Nothing to report.

15. Animal Control

Nothing to report.

16. Marking and Banding

Nothing to report.

17. Disease Prevention and Control

Nothing to report.

H. PUBLIC USE

1. General

Despite the Refuge's generally secluded, out-of-the-way location, lack of established interpretive foot trails and annual flooding, non-consumptive public use of the Refuge continued this year. There is no accurate way of determining exact use and number of visits.

2. Outdoor Classrooms - Students

Nothing to report.

3. Outdoor Classrooms - Teachers

Nothing to report.

4. Interpretive Foot Trails

Nothing to report.

5. Interpretive Tour Routes

Nothing to report.

6. Interpretive Exhibits/Demonstrations

Nothing to report.

7. Other Interpretive Programs

Nothing to report.

8. Hunting

Approximately 40 percent of the Refuge is open to waterfowl hunting. The majority of the waterfowl hunt area is located north of Bog Road, along portions of the Refuge's lake shoreline and along portions of Swan River. Steel shot is required. Big game and upland game bird hunting is prohibited.

The 2002-2003 duck and goose season opened September 28. Opening day hunter activity and success was light. Early "freeze-up" limited late season waterfowl hunting activities to open portions of Swan River and shorelines of the Lake.

9. Fishing

The annual closure period limits spring and early summer fishing activity on the Refuge. After July 15, anglers often venture into Spring Creek looking for pike; however, success has always been limited due to heavy vegetation in the creek. Those portions of Swan River which flow through the Refuge are open to fishing the entire year. Fishing activity is often limited in the river due to high water levels during the spring and early summer months and low flows in late summer and early fall.

The most popular fishing spot on Swan Lake continued to be at the mouth of Spring Creek just outside the Refuge boundary. Northern pike lie in the off-shore reed beds before going upstream to spawn in the dense aquatic vegetation inside the Refuge. Anglers often take advantage of the situation by anchoring just outside the Refuge boundary in hopes of catching "the big one." In years past, several 25 pound pike have been caught.

10. Trapping

Nothing to report.

11. Wildlife Observation

Nothing to report.

12. Other Wildlife-Oriented Recreation

Nothing to report.

13. Camping

Nothing to report.

14. Picnicking

Nothing to report.

15. Off-Road Vehicle Use

Nothing to report.

16. Other Non-Wildlife Oriented Recreation

Nothing to report.

17. Law Enforcement

Law enforcement efforts continued to be coordinated with MDFWP wardens. The isolated nature of the Refuge and its distance from the Lost Trail Refuge headquarters often make LE investigations difficult due to the "after-the-fact" response time. The most common enforcement complaint received this year from the public is continued snowmobile trespass during the winter months. No citations were issued this year.

18. Cooperating Associations

Nothing to report.

19. Concessions

Nothing to report.

I. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

1. New Construction

Nothing to report.

2. Rehabilitation

Nothing to report.

3. Major Maintenance

Nothing to report.

4. Equipment Utilization and Replacement

All equipment utilized on the Refuge is also utilized for on-going daily operations and work activities on flathead WPA's and Lost Trail Refuge. See the Lost Trail NWR annual narrative report for specific details.

5. Communications Systems

Nothing to report.

6. Computer Systems

Nothing to report.

7. Energy Conservation

Nothing to report.

8. Other

Nothing to report.

J. OTHER ITEMS

1. Cooperative Programs

Nothing to report.

2. Other Economic Uses

Nothing to report.

3. Items of Interest

Nothing to report.

4. Credits

Ray Washtak supplied information and the final draft for this narrative. Initial drafts, typing and editing and compilation were completed by Terri Middlemist at the National Bison Range.

K. FEEDBACK

Nothing to report.

	S	S	F	W
DIPPERS				
— Dipper	o	o	u	u
WRENS				
— Winter Wren	o	o	o	o
— Long-billed Marsh Wren	u	c	c	o
MOCKINGBIRDS				
— Gray Catbird	u	u	c	
THRUSHES, BLUEBIRDS				
— American Robin	u	c	c	u
— Varied Thrush	c	c	u	r
— Swainson's Thrush	u	u	u	
— Veery	o	u	o	
— Mountain Bluebird	c	u	o	
— Townsend's Solitaire	o		o	
KINGLETS, PIPITS				
— Golden-crowned Kinglet	u	u	u	u
— Ruby-crowned Kinglet	u	u	u	u
— Water Pipit	u		o	o
WAXWINGS, SHRIKES, STARLINGS				
— Bohemian Waxwing	u			c
— Cedar Waxwing	u	u	u	
— Northern Shrike	u			u
— Starling	c	c	u	
VIREOS, WOOD WARBLERS, WEAVER FINCHES				
— Red-eyed Vireo	u	u		
— Warbling Vireo	o	u		
— Orange-crowned Warbler	u	u	u	
— Nashville Warbler	u	u	u	
— Yellow Warbler	c	c	u	
— Yellow-rumped Warbler	c	c	u	
— Townsend's Warbler	o	c	u	
— Northern Waterthrush	o	c	u	
— MacGillivray's Warbler	o	u	u	
— Common Yellowthroat	u	u	u	
— Wilson's Warbler	o	u	o	
— American Redstart	o	u	u	
— House Sparrow	o	o		
BLACKBIRDS AND ORIOLES				
— Bobolink	u	u		
— Western Meadowlark	u	u	u	
— Yellow-headed Blackbird	c	c	u	
— Red-winged Blackbird	c	c	u	
— Brewer's Blackbird	u	c		
— Brown-headed Cowbird	u	c		
TANAGERS				
— Western Tanager	o	o		
GROSBEAKS, SPARROWS, AND FINCHES				
— Black-headed Grosbeak	u	u		
— Lazuli Bunting	o	u		
— Evening Grosbeak	u	u	u	u
— Cassin's Finch	o	u	o	o

	S	S	F	W
— House Finch	o			
— Gray-crowned Rosy Finch	o			
— Common Redpoll				u
— Pine Siskin	c	c	c	u
— American Goldfinch	o	o	u	o
— Red Crossbill	u	u	u	u
— White-winged Crossbill				o
— Rufous-sided Towhee	u	o	o	
— Savannah Sparrow	u	u	u	
— Grasshopper Sparrow	u	o	u	
— Vesper Sparrow	u	c	u	
— Lark Sparrow	o			
— Dark-eyed Junco	c	c	c	c
— Tree Sparrow				o
— Chipping Sparrow	o	u	u	
— Harris Sparrow				u
— White-crowned Sparrow	u	u	o	o
— Fox Sparrow	o	o	o	
— Song Sparrow	c	c	u	u
— Snow Bunting				u

PLEASE NOTE:

We would appreciate your help if you observe birds that are listed as rare to the Swan River National Wildlife Refuge or if you notice unusual concentrations or activities of birds on the Refuge. Please report the following information by letter or telephone to the Refuge Manager:

Your name, address _____

date, weather, exact location _____

species, number of birds _____

distinguishing features and/or _____

activities _____

Where to write for current regulations and information:

Refuge Manager, Swan River NWR
c/o Lost Trail NWR
6295 Pleasant Valley Road
Marion, MT 59925
406/858-2216 FAX 406/858-2218

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources."

The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

Birds of the



Swan River

NATIONAL WILDLIFE
REFUGE

Montana



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



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**SWAN RIVER
NATIONAL WILDLIFE
REFUGE**

Welcome to

The 1,568-acre Swan River National Wildlife Refuge is located 38 miles southeast of Kalispell, Montana. The variety of habitats including grassland, marsh, and wooded river bottom support elk, deer, moose, grizzly and black bear, beaver, river otter, muskrat, and at least 171 species of birds.

The Refuge provides nesting habitat for the endangered bald eagle, great blue herons, black terns, 23 species of waterfowl, and a variety of raptors and songbirds. A canoe trip through the Refuge on the Swan River provides excellent birding throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Canada geese, whistling swan, mallard and goldeneye winter in the open waters of the Swan River and the canals and creeks which cross the Refuge.

The following birds have been observed on the Refuge since its establishment in 1974. Very special thanks must go to Ellie Jones and other Audubon Society members who have contributed much time to the completion of this pamphlet. The Swan River NWR was adopted by the Flathead Chapter of the National Audubon Society in 1981 under the Society's Adopt-A-Refuge Program.

EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS:

Seasons:

S—March-May
S—June-August
F—September-November
W—December-February

Birds nesting on the Refuge are preceded by a •.

Symbols indicating seasonal abundance of each species are as follows:

should see in suitable habitat
might see in suitable habitat
seen only a few times during a season
seen at intervals of 2 to 5 years

The following bird list is in accordance with the 5th A.O.U. Check-list as amended. New names are used in all cases.

100NS	.....	• Common Loon	.....	c	u
GREBES	.....	• Red-necked Grebe	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• Horned Grebe	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• Eared Grebe	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• Western Grebe	.....	u	c
.....	.....	• Pied-billed Grebe	.....	c	c
CORMORANTS	.....	.....	.....	o	o
.....	.....	• Double-crested Cormorant	.....	o	o
HERONS AND BITTERNS	.....	.....	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• Great Blue Heron	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• American Bittern	.....	u	u
SWANS, GEESSE, DUCKS	.....	.....	.....	o	o
.....	.....	Whistling Swan	.....	u	u
.....	.....	• Canada Goose	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• Snow Goose	.....	o	o
.....	.....	• Ross' Goose	.....	r	r
.....	.....	• Mallard	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• Gadwall	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• Pintail	.....	u	u
.....	.....	• Green-winged Teal	.....	u	u
.....	.....	• Blue-winged Teal	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• Cinnamon Teal	.....	c	c
.....	.....	• American Wigeon	.....	u	u

S		Northern Shoveler	u
S		Wood Duck	c
F		Redhead	u
F		Ring-necked Duck	u
W		Canvasback	o
		Lesser Scaup	o
		Common Goldeneye	c
		Barrow's Goldeneye	c
		Bufflehead	u
		White-winged Scoter	r
		Harlequin Duck	r
		Ruddy Duck	u
		Hooded Merganser	u
		Common Merganser	c
		Red-breasted Merganser	r
		EAGLES, HAWKS, AND FALCONS	
		Goshawk	u
		Sharp-shinned Hawk	u
		Red-tailed Hawk	u
		Swainson's Hawk	u
		Rough-legged Hawk	u
		Golden Eagle	c
		Bald Eagle	c
		Marsh Hawk	u
		Osprey	c
		Prairie Falcon	o
		Merrill	o
		American Kestrel	c
		GROUSE, PHEASANTS	
		Blue Grouse	o
		Ruffed Grouse	c
		Ring-necked Pheasant	o
		RAILS	
		Sora	u
		American Coot	c
		PROVERS	
		Killdeer	c
		SHOREBIRDS, GULLS, TERNS	
		Common Snipe	c
		Spotted Sandpiper	c
		Solitary Sandpiper	o
		Greater Yellowlegs	o
		Lesser Yellowlegs	u
		Least Sandpiper	u
		Long-billed Dowitcher	u
		Marbled Godwit	o
		American Avocet	o
		Black-necked Stilt	o
		Wilson's Phalarope	u
		California Gull	u
		Ring-billed Gull	o
		Forster's Tern	o
		Black Tern	o

	S	F	W
Doves			
Mourning dove	o	o	
Owls			
Screech Owl	r	r	o
Great Horned Owl	r	o	o
Pygmy Owl	o	o	o
Barred Owl	o	o	o
Goatsuckers, Swifts, Hummingbirds			
Common Nighthawk	u	c	o
Vaux's Swift	o	o	o
White-throated Swift	r	o	o
Rufous Hummingbird	u	u	u
Calliope Hummingbird	u	u	u
Black-chinned Hummingbird	r	u	u
Kingfishers, Woodpeckers			
Belted Kingfisher	o	o	o
Common Flicker	o	c	o
Pileated Woodpecker	u	u	u
Lewis's Woodpecker	o	o	o
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	u	u	u
Hairy Woodpecker	u	u	u
Downy Woodpecker	u	u	u
Flycatchers			
Eastern Kingbird	o	u	o
Western Kingbird	o	c	o
Willow Flycatcher	c	c	c
Hammond's Flycatcher	u	u	u
Dusky Flycatcher	o	u	u
Western Flycatcher	u	u	u
Western Wood Pewee	u	u	u
Larks, Swallows			
Horned Lark	o	r	r
Violet-green Swallow	o	c	c
Tree Swallow	c	c	c
Rough-winged Swallow	c	c	c
Barn Swallow	u	c	c
Cliff Swallow	u	u	u
Jays, Magpies, Crows			
Gray Jay	o	r	u
Steller's Jay	o	r	r
Black-billed Magpie	c	c	u
Common Raven	c	c	u
Common Crow	c	u	u
Clark's Nutcracker	r	o	o
Chickadees, Nuthatches, Creepers			
Black-capped Chickadee	c	c	c
Mountain Chickadee	o	o	o
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	o	o	o
White-breasted Nuthatch	u	u	u
Red-breasted Nuthatch	u	u	u
Brown Creeper	u	u	u

- ▶ Game fish include yellow perch, bull trout, northern pike, kokanee salmon, largemouth bass, cutthroat trout, brook trout and mountain whitefish.
- ▶ A state plant species-of-concern, water howelia (*Howellia aquatilis*) can be found on the Nature Conservancy Preserve that borders the southern edge of the refuge, but the plant has not been confirmed to exist on the refuge to date.

History:

- ▶ The refuge was established in 1973 under authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, at the request of Montana Senator Lee Metcalf, who desired to see the area preserved.
- ▶ The refuge is a statellite unit of the National Bison Range. Day-to-day administration and operations are the responsibility of the Assistant Refuge Manager located at Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge, Marion, MT.

Cultural Resources:

- ▶ To date, there are no known cultural resources.

Recreational Uses:

- ▶ Portions of the refuge are open to waterfowl hunting, with the majority being located north of Bog Road and along portions of Swan River.
- ▶ Big game and upland game bird hunting is prohibited. Trapping is prohibited.
- ▶ Fishing is not allowed on Spring Creek from March 1 through July 15; fishing is allowed on those portions of Swan River which flow through the refuge.
- ▶ The refuge is listed in the state Watchable Wildlife Guide and receives a number of visitors to view some of the 171 bird species and deer, elk and black bear.
- ▶ Boating is allowed through the refuge on Swan River.
- ▶ Bog Road (not maintained and not recommended for vehicles) traverses the refuge east to west. The road is open for wildlife observation, photography and provides access to the interior portion of the refuge.

Other Uses:

- ▶ Haying and grazing are conducted periodically with a Special-Use Permit for habitat management purposes.



AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES...

where wildlife comes naturally!

FACTS *from the National Wildlife Refuge System*

Swan River National Wildlife Refuge

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Refuge Manager

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Site Manager: Ray Washtak
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Marion, MT 59925

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E-Mail: ray_washtak@fws.gov

Location:

Located in northwest Montana, 38 miles southeast of Creston, in the Swan Valley.

Establishing Purpose:

Lands were acquired in 1973 "for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds" (Migratory Bird Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 715-715r).

Acreage:

1,568 acres, with an additional 210-acre Forest Service inholding that is managed under a Memorandum of Understanding by the USFWS.

Landscape Characteristics:

- ▶ The refuge lies within the floodplain of the Swan River above Swan Lake and between the Swan Mountain Range to the east and the Mission Mountain Range to the west.
- ▶ The valley was formed when glacial ice poured down the steep slopes of the Mission Range into Swan Lake.
- ▶ The valley floor is generally flat but rises steeply to adjacent forested mountain sides.
- ▶ 80% of the floodplain is composed of reed canary grass and the other 20% consists of forests of old growth fir, spruce, cedar and larch. Large cottonwood trees exist along the river.
- ▶ Swan River, which once meandered through the floodplain, has been forced to the west side of the refuge by deposits of silt, leaving a series of oxbow sloughs within the refuge floodplain.
- ▶ There are no significant developments or facilities on the refuge.

Wildlife:

- ▶ Waterfowl species consist of Canada geese, mallards, cinnamon teal and common goldeneye.
- ▶ The refuge provides a nesting site for a pair of bald eagles.
- ▶ Other birds of prey frequenting the area include northern harriers, Swainson's hawks, red-tailed hawks and great-horned owls.
- ▶ Sora and Virginia Rails hide among the reeds while foraging.
- ▶ Marsh wrens, song sparrows and yellow-headed blackbirds nest and forage on the Refuge.
- ▶ White-tailed deer are the most common large mammal seen. Elk, moose, beaver, bobcat and black bear are known to inhabit the area. Other resident wildlife are coyotes, beaver, muskrat and raccoons.
- ▶ The Swan and Mission Mountain Ranges have been designated as a "habitat corridor" of the threatened grizzly bear, and bears sometimes move onto the refuge during the early spring to forage.